

Switzerland. Ah yes, alpenhorns, yodelling, watches and William Tell — and lashings of food. Even staid Zurich knows how to turn the goodies on, if you know where to look.

ZURICH'S OTHER SIDE

by Jack Goldfarb

A current brochure from the Zurich Tourist Office boasts that many people have found many things to love — besides chocolate and cheese — in Switzerland's largest city. James Joyce loved the wine, Goethe the scenery, Lenin the Central Library, Rilke the soap, and Wagner his best friend's Zurich-born wife.

Other creative talents who took up residence here — people like Einstein, Le Corbusier and Solzhenitsyn — no doubt were attracted by the tranquil atmosphere, typified by the familiar white swans that glide serenely along the town's Limmat River. But what I love about Zurich is hardly the tranquility. Nor its sweet smell of affluence. Nor its clockwork punctilio. I love its groovy 'flip side'.

On the other side of the river, away from the fashionable Bahnhof-Strasse shops, basilica-like banks, and imposing insurance houses, Zurich's 'other side' spreads along the Limmatquai, where ancient Helvetians fished from stilt huts and craftsmen set up their guildhalls in the Middle Ages. Today it is a racy, fun-loving district, a kind of extra-territorial canton frequented by throngs of pleasure-seeking Swiss. Popularly called the Niederdorf or Dorfli (Little Village), this lively quarter encompasses tiny, stride-wide streets named after mediaeval trades, statue-studded squares, and a cluster of excellent restaurants.

Niederdorf's distinctive beat pulses most strongly along its main thoroughfare, the cobble-stoned, old-worldish Niederdorf-Strasse. Starting, improbably enough, at an ancient cathedral where the reformer Zwingli preached his sixteenth-century sermons on abstinence, and ending up at an equally unlikely 'alcohol-free tearoom', Niederdorf-Strasse en route combines the chumminess of a block party,

the variety of a carnival, a nightlife style all its own, and two name changes.

The Niederdorf's diversions include just about everything: cabarets, jazz bars, restaurants, night clubs, wine cellars, theatres, cinemas, beer-halls, pinball parlours and the inevitable streetladies-in-waiting. But the fun fondue doesn't have the roguery of Pigalle, the tawdriness of Soho, or the brashness of Greenwich Village. Niederdorf has a good-humoured, hip-Bohemian flavour derived from the local population of students, musicians, and artists who inhabit the centuries-old buildings lining the narrow streets.

By day, when shoppers and pram-wheeling mothers frequent the handful of boutiques, grocery stores and antique shops, Niederdorf is a surprisingly placid place. But as night falls, the fanfare medley of jazz, hard rock and drinking songs lure the passersby off brightly lit Niederdorf-Strasse into the dimly lit entertainment spots.

At the Haifisch Bar, the table telephones jingle and lone-some callers across the room spin out slick lines inviting partners to dance. And the Schöchlischmiede (*you* pronounce it!) pop tunes blast through durable amplifiers while the beads-and-jeans crowd snap their fingers sore. At the Oliver Twist pub, a merry gathering of Anglophiles down tankards of British ale in a recreated Dickensian atmosphere.

Next door, the six hundred year-old Oepfelhammer is packed to its oak rafters with devotees of its mellow wine and cozy confines. Guitars are passed around and robust voices raised in full chorus. Gottfried Keller, a noted Swiss novelist who drank his ample share of the Oepfelhammer's wine, has left his mark here, along with thousands of other